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ANTY 491.01: Special Topics - Archaeology and Social Justice

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Anthropology 491
Special Topic: Archaeology and Social Justice Practicum
Course Syllabus Fall 2021
The University of Montana, Department of Anthropology

Tuesdays 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Social Sciences Room 262



[Image from: bioneers.org](http://bioneers.org)

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“Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced.”
~ James Baldwin, American novelist, playwright, essayist, poet, and activist

Course Description:

One only need to watch the evening news or scroll through social media to see our world is on the brink of disaster the likes of which most people in this class have not seen in our lifetime. Social and economic inequality, environmental collapse, disease, and global injustice are often simultaneously cause and effect. Anthropology as a discipline and archaeology as a tool has historically contributed to these inequalities and injustices and in many ways continues to do so. The field of archaeology and the way in which archaeologists tell the story of the past through material culture has links to broad socio-political processes, including but not limited to colonialism, nationalism, racism, violence, inequality, and “dark heritage.”

Archaeology and its practitioners are often entangled in western value systems and epistemology. It seems, however, that we are on the precipice of a paradigm shift and a concerted effort by many to transform the profession. In this class we will seek to understand the intersections of anthropology, heritage, politics, ethics, and the way they shape the discipline and those who work within it. The projects students will design for this course seek to challenge the frameworks used in archaeology and anthropology to bridge the divide between academic knowledge and the broader social impacts of our work to confront the injustices of our time.

Safety Message:



- **Mask use is REQUIRED within the classroom.**
- UM recommends students get the COVID-19 vaccine. Please direct your questions or concerns about vaccines to Curry Health Center.
- Please keep your distance from others as much as possible.
- Assigned seats and class attendance will be recorded to support contact tracing efforts.
- Eating in class is discouraged within the classroom as it requires the removal of masks.
- Stay home if you feel sick and/or if exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms and contact the Curry Health Center at 243-4330.
- If you are required to isolate or quarantine, you will receive support in the class to ensure continued academic progress.

About this Class:

Over the course of this semester, remember that this is your class. What you get out of this class is a direct result of what you are willing to put into it. Deadlines for tasks, preparation for each class session, and full engagement (class participation) are all imperative not only to receive a good grade but for your own edification. You must take responsibility for your own intellectual growth and success.

Class will simultaneously **meet in person and on zoom**. If you are unable to attend class in person, you will be expected to join via zoom if possible. **Each class meeting will be recorded, and those recordings will be available in Moodle for review or in the case that you must miss class.** If you absolutely must miss a class, you are required to contact the instructor prior to the start of class. Each unexcused absence with no attempt to make up the absence will result in a drop of 5 points from the total grade.

Participation and interaction with fellow students is expected. If you are attending via zoom, you are required to have VIDEO ON during class and still participate. Be aware that if you are making a habit of not contributing to the discussion, I will call on you. Be prepared.

Course Content Warning:

Some of the material in this course will involve dark and heavy topics that might be emotionally and intellectually difficult. Graphic or intense content is intended only to serve the intellectual debate and conversation, not for “shock-value” and an effort will be made to identify this content in advance. If you have concerns or even think you might have concerns about certain topics, please do not hesitate to contact me ahead of time.

Students with Disabilities:

The Department of Anthropology is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical disabilities or documented learning disabilities. University policy states that it is the responsibility of students with documented disabilities to contact instructors to

discuss appropriate accommodations to ensure equity in grading, classroom experiences, and outside assignments. The instructor will meet with the student and the staff of the Disability Services for Students (DSS) to make accommodations. Please contact DSS (umt.edu/dss; 406. 243.2373) for more information.

Academic Integrity:

The University of Montana expects its students to be academically honest, particularly in regard to plagiarism. "Plagiarism is the representing of another's work as one's own." Both copyright laws and University policies are rigid as concerns plagiarism. Consult the current "Student Conduct Code" for details regarding penalties for plagiarism.

Course Readings and Discussion:

There is a course bibliography that you are encouraged to look at for readings that may be of interest to you and/or the topic you chose for your project. There may be a few readings assigned throughout the semester, but your readings will primarily come from your fellow students. We will discuss this further on the first day of class.

Students will present their projects/project ideas to the class for discussion and feedback at least once. The schedule will be set during our first class meeting. The week prior to your scheduled presentation, you will send a reading to your classmates. This reading should provide the class with a general overview, background, or perspective about your chosen topic. Presentations can discuss the article but more importantly should present your project idea, how you plan to execute it, why it is important, and why you are proposing to do it that way. It can be somewhat casual (PowerPoint encouraged; not required) but you must be organized and prepared. Again, we will discuss this in more detail during the first day of class.

Discussion "Ground Rules" and Classroom Behavior:

- Opposing viewpoints are inevitable with the material we will be covering in the class. Disagreements are OK, encouraged even – combativeness or abuse are NOT.
- Each person in this class will treat others, and can expect to be treated, fairly and with respect. No student (or instructor) will demean or devalue another's experiences, perceptions, questions, or comments. If you find yourself beginning with statements such as, "All due respect, but..." or "No offense, but..." consider re-assessing what you are about to say.
- We will challenge each other's perceptions that are perhaps based on societal myths and stereotypes but will do so respectfully. The challenge we face as a class working toward active solutions regarding these topics is to question and think critically about existing and dominant narratives.
- While it is everyone's responsibility to actively guard against being offensive to fellow students, it is equally everyone's responsibility to not easily take offense. If something "rubs you the wrong way," ask for clarification before getting riled up.

Grades:

Grade assessment will be based on the following assignments:

Attendance and Participation	20%
Project Design/Abstract	10%
Substantive Project Overview	20%
Final Project	40%
Project Reflection	10%

Semester Project Details:

Over the course of the semester each student will work on an individual project that, as mentioned in the course description, seeks to challenge the frameworks used in archaeology and anthropology to bridge the divide between academic knowledge and the broader social impacts of our work. This is your chance to get creative about how you think we as anthropologists can confront and contribute to the discussion/cause of social justice. The first place to start with this is to choose a topic in which social injustice can be prevalent. A list of potential topics includes (but is not limited to):

- Colonialism/Nationalism/Decolonizing the Discipline
- Capitalism
- Indigenous Archaeology/Indigenous Issues in Archaeology
- Art/Photography
- NAGPRA/Repatriation
- Dark Heritage and Dark Heritage Sites
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Racism
- Museums
- Law/Legal Issues/Cultural Resource Management
- Environment/Climate Change
- Forced Migration
- Public Education/Pop Culture/Activism
- Preservation/Architecture/City Planning
- Monuments and Memorials
- Violence/Military
- Forensics/Mass Graves

The next step is to decide what type of project you would like to do. This is where your ideas and creativity come in. Keep in mind as you design your project that the whole idea is to bridge that gap between academia and the public. Your project needs to be something that can reach and be understood by a broad and general audience. Examples of possible projects (again, not limited to these):

- Prepare a publication for a current events magazine that is widely distributed to the public. For example, *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *Sapiens*
- Create a video, online exhibit, or website
- Plan a local event or presentation for the public
- Ethnography/Oral History project
- Design (and potentially run) a workshop

To keep you on track with developing your project, we will have checkpoints along the way.

- **Due September 7** – a brief project design/abstract of approximately 500-700 words.
- **Due October 12** – a more substantive description of your project including literature review and bibliography, background information, theoretical justification... Think of this as the answer to the “WHY?” and “SO WHAT?” questions. Minimum 5 pages.
- **Due November 23** – depending on what your project is and the format, you should be ready to execute it or have it scheduled. We can talk about this more as your projects progress.
- **Due December 15** – a final reflection about the project, its success, public feedback, etc.